

HELEN KELLER'S INDIAN-KEEN
SENSE OF SMELL

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PERSONAL GLIMPSES

Continued

language, got drunk, and wore a bad lot generally. So he quit. He could take a swig of whisky, just like drinking a bottle of pop, and not want any more, but as to getting drunk and disorderly, he couldn't see it! Why, he "lived for ten years in Boston and wasn't arrested once!"

He said he'd always been strong on work. Nobody could beat him.

He wanted to know if I had ever been to North Adams, Massachusetts. He had. His father told him it was a pretty place, so he took a day off and went. He spent thirty-five cents on the trolley-cars, and had a dandy ride through the country. But it cost so much to ride on the trolley, he couldn't get anything to eat. He looked about and found a woman beating a carpet, persuaded her to let him help with the job, and, having beaten all of the rugs and carpets in the house, received forty cents, "big money!" She gave him dinner, also, with good root-beer on the side. Then he walked along, and found a woman fixing a stovepipe. She asked him if he could fix a stovepipe, and he replied: "Why, I am O. K., Kelly of Boston on that job." Having fixed the pipe, he polished the stove, and did so good a job that the woman gave him fifty cents and a good dinner, the second for the day. He didn't bother to eat supper. He had a fine day, saw the sights, and got back home with fifty cents more than he went away with.

I discovered the old boy could sing. He knew all the songs the old circus clowns used to sing, particularly "Whoa, Emma," which he rendered with great gusto. He said he was able to whistle for five hours running, in his prime.

I let the old boy out at Milford. He said he was delighted with the trip, and tears came into his eyes when I slipped him a dollar bill.

Of other encounters with hitch-hikers, Mr. Wilstach relates:

On a late trip alone to Canada and thence to Maine, covering a run of about 1,500 miles, lifts were given on but three occasions. About ten miles beyond Yonkers, I discovered a man and a woman trudging along. As they did not ask for a ride, I stopped the car and offered them a lift. The man explained that they were walking to his wife's home in Michigan. They were a vaudeville team, the woman a singer and dancer and the man an acrobat. Tired out after a year of hard work, they were off on a vacation. On their backs they carried portable tents. They had come all the way from Cincinnati, dropping off at New York to see some of the shows.

The next hitch-hiker I picked up was a wobegone young man standing under a tree seeking shelter from the rain. He didn't ask for a lift, but looked very much as tho he would appreciate one. When I got him into the car, he told me that he was on his way to Albany to visit his father, and that he had just been discharged from the Navy after three years' service. He had many interesting things to say of his experiences in foreign ports, and of what life in the Navy was like.

One encounters quite a number of young girls in couples on the road. At a filling station, I discovered two college girls who had come all the way from Buffalo. They said they hadn't experienced the least trouble from forward males on the way,

that everybody had been polite and agreeable to them. One of the girls explained that a man and a woman in a car could be depended upon, almost every time, to give them a hitch.

HY 1024

HELEN KELLER'S INDIAN KEEN SENSE OF SMELL

THE car windows were open. It was a crisp winter day. The wonderful woman whose mind and soul had emerged triumphantly from the obscurity of blindness, deafness and dumbness, was under observation by a medical friend, Dr. Frederick Tilney, who now tells the story in *Personality*. Knowing that the sense of smell had played an important part in Miss Keller's intellectual development, Dr. Tilney asked her if she could tell anything about the country through which they were passing in their twenty-mile drive over Long Island roads. In response, we learn:

Her first observation was that we were making our way through open fields. This proved to be the case, for the road ran through a golf course. Later she said we were passing trees. The road at this point made its way through a small grove. She then called attention to the fact that we had just passed a house with an open fire, and looking back I saw a small cottage with smoke pouring out of its chimney. She knew at once when we turned off the main road to enter the Motor Parkway, and in the course of our drive along this road she said we were then passing a number of large buildings. Looking behind me, I saw that we were actually in the vicinity of the several groups of structures constituting the Creedmore State Hospital for the Insane.

In the course of our conversation concerning her olfactory sensitiveness, I asked Miss Keller if she would write out for me how important the sense of smell had been to her life and development. Shortly after this she called attention to the fact that we had just entered Garden City and were passing the plant of Doubleday, Doran & Company, her publishers, which actually was the case. Her realization of this fact, she told me, was due to her smelling the ink from the presses of the publishing-house, with which she is very familiar.

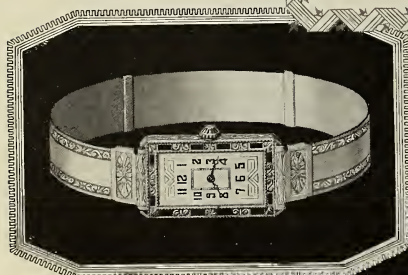
Here we record Dr. Tilney's conclusion, however, that, "when tested objectively, Miss Keller's olfactory sense shows nothing above the normal average." Reading on:

Seven aromatic substances were used in these tests, including alcohol, oil of wintergreen, peppermint, formaldehyde, eucalyptus, asafetida, and valerian. It may be said that the fundamental pathway for the sense of smell in Miss Keller has absolutely no advantage over that of the normal adult individual. The sense of taste similarly showed no advantage in its fundamental organization. Concerning the sense of sight it may be said in summary that Miss Keller is totally blind and has been in that condition since her nineteenth month. She has neither light nor object perception. Examination reveals the fact that there is no retina present, and she is therefore deprived of the primary conduction paths for visual sense. With reference to the special sense of hearing, Miss Keller is completely deaf, having neither bone nor air conduction in either ear. Concerning her bone

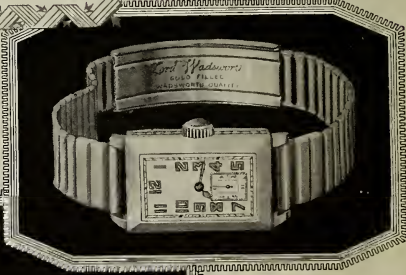
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PERSONAL GLIMPSES

Continued

conduction, some question might arise, inasmuch as she is conscious of vibratory impression. This, however, is in all probability not due to her auditory sense, but rather to an extraordinary development of her vibratory sensibility.

The case of Helen Keller demonstrates what the brain may do under the influence of concentrated attention. It shows the expansions, experience, understanding, and knowledge which may result from such demands made upon the brain. The question naturally arises, Is it possible for the brain of modern man to respond to such demands? The answer must be in the affirmative. The great difficulties in the case arise not from the brain's potential powers to respond, but from man's great ineptitude to make the necessary demands for such further development.

Dr. Tilney reminds us that Helen Keller's development began in her seventh year, when she acquired a teacher from the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston—Miss Sullivan, now Mrs. Macy—and that in later years Miss Keller was graduated with honors from Radcliffe College. He adds:

My problem in considering Miss Keller's sensory equipment was to estimate as accurately as possible the means by which she gained her impression of her total environment. From her nineteenth month she has been blind and deaf. Her sense of smell, however, has been preserved and is of certain value to her in making contacts with the world. Her sense of taste is moderately preserved and, while of much less value than the sense of smell, has not been without its service in her development. It is the sense of touch, however, upon which she principally depends.

Contrasted with Helen Keller is Laura Bridgman, who was even more limited as to the avenues of her sensory approach to the nervous system. Laura Bridgman lived to be about sixty years of age. During her infancy she suffered from severe convulsions. In her twenty-fourth month she had scarlet-fever. Two older sisters died of the disease. Laura's eyes and ears suppurated, and sight as well as hearing was totally destroyed. Smell and taste were so nearly destroyed that both of these were almost useless to her through the greater part of her life. It is doubtful whether at any time she had any real olfactory sense. Thus Miss Bridgman made her adjustment to life with only one of the five possible contact senses, namely, the sense of touch.

Helen Keller, on the contrary, had the advantage of olfactory sensation and also the sense of taste. The latter sense avenue failed to open up much more of the world to her.

"The sense of smell is the esthetic sense, I think, even more than sight," wrote Miss Keller on her typewriter later, in a letter composed at his request. Further, she wrote:

I know that odors give me a vivid conception of my surroundings. I call smell my landscape because, when I walk or drive through the country, so many odors tell



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THUNDER MAKERS OF THE PRAIRIE

Here is part of the buffalo herd at National Park, Wainwright, Alberta, Canada, where this noble American animal is raised as a rancher raises cattle.

THE BISON—A REAPPEARING AMERICAN

THUNDER resounded from the prairie—the hoof beats of horses, the shouts of hunters, the pounding flight of the terrified herd. A rifle barked, and another buffalo fell in the dust. Such a scene may be enacted in fact in the near future in the American Southwest and in Canada as well, for the buffalo, long considered a "vanishing American," is coming back, thanks to a policy of conservation. While there is no thought that the day will return when the bison herds will darken the country with their numbers, or immense herds of half a million range in the open and stamped in terror, laying low everything in their path, the increase in American and Canadian herds to figures approximating 20,000 head is creating a pasturage problem, we learn from David Baxter in *Field*

and *Stream*. At least one State of the Union has plans for a revival of buffalo-hunting under certain restrictions. Says Mr. Baxter in elaboration of this:

The State of Arizona has purchased the buffalo herd of House Rock Valley, the money to be raised by hunting license fees. The animals will be given the open range as a part of the game department's program. Then each year every purchaser of a hunting license will be given a numbered ticket. From the total number of tickets, twenty will be drawn by lot, each one of which will entitle its holder to the privilege of shooting one male buffalo. In other words, twenty licensed hunters may kill one bison each per year.

The original herd of two hundred head is to be kept intact for reproductive purposes, thus supplying buffalo hunting for an indefinite period. If the increase



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me of fields, streams, honey-sweet valleys, and hillsides covered with pines. If, as we are told, the ten thousand Greeks "shouted for joy when they saw the sea," I can imagine there must have been still more rejoicing when its bracing breath filled their nostrils.

How many memories, sad and bright, odors awaken in one's heart! Instantly a scent will carry one back through the years to a forgotten experience. A correspondent who had been with "The Princess Pat's Regiment" in France told me that once, after his return to America, the scent of trodden grass caused him to faint, so forcibly had it brought to him the memory of being wounded, and lying with face downward on blood-soaked grass!

After quoting a number of Shakespearean passages illustrating the power of odors, Miss Keller continued:

I recall a description I once read in French—unfortunately, I can not remember the author's name—of a man who stood on the seashore with the wind blowing in his face, full of heart-stirring odors. He threw up his arms ecstatically, taking in great "mouthfuls of air," as the French idiom so vividly expresses it, while his heart overflowed with tender memories. The scents from land and ocean brought back to him the loved hearth of his boyhood where he had gazed into the fire, seeing magical pictures, the kisses of his mother, the fine, virile personality of his father, the orchard where he had played, and the summer nights when he wandered under the stars with great thoughts in his brain. Throughout the passage it is the sensation of smell, not sight or hearing, which awakens the deepest emotions.

I wonder how many people are aware of the complex odors in a house that has been lived in a long time. They give me a comfortable sense of hospitality. They suggest cheery winter fires and peace and sweet family intimacies. There are lingering scents of perfume and garments in closets and drawers, and appetizing odors of cookery, which some people find unpleasant, but which seem to me kindly.

Balzac attached much meaning to the smells that came to him while he worked in his attic. He was sensitive to the odor of brown gravy and the exhalations from the city streets. He read much of charm, and of ugliness, too, into the smell of garments and the cosmetics people used.

I was much interested in an article by Stuart Mackenzie in *The American Magazine*, entitled "Smells Are Surer Than Sounds and Sights." He notes among other things that plants emit many odors besides the perfume of their blossoms. Sometimes the scents are in the wood itself, as in cedar and sandalwood, sometimes in the bark, as in cinnamon and cassia, or in the leaves, as in pines, bay, mint, thyme, and lemon verbena. Others are in the fruits—orange, lemon, and nutmeg. He has observed smells also in the seeds—almond and caraway, and I would add magnolia seeds, and sometimes certain secretions are fragrant, like turpentine, and even roots have a strong odor, like the orris root. All this knowledge helps me to get joy out of life.

Mr. Mackenzie also says that he felt keenly his inferiority in the olfactory sense when he lived among some Western Indians. They could detect a distant campfire where he could not possibly perceive it. This makes me feel my kinship to the Indians; for I, also, can smell at a great distance.



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